



# MULTI-STATE WATER and CLIMATE COLLABORATION in the PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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Since 1995 Cooperative Extension Services in the four-state Pacific Northwest region (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington) have been collaborating with the Environmental Protection Agency on water programming with funding from USDA beginning in 2001. Despite the large geographic area, the states in this region face similar water issues and their regional collaboration has resulted in numerous ongoing research and outreach activities. In recent years, their work has expanded to include regional impacts of climate change.

## **Pacific Northwest Water Issues Survey**

In 2002 the region conducted a survey on the Public Attitudes and Aptitudes Concerning Water Issues (Mahler et. al., 2004 and 2005) and a follow-up survey in 2007. According to Mahler et. al., 2010 one key finding was that over 90 percent of the region's citizens continue to list clean water as a priority issue. Another finding was the need for Extension to reassess its methods of disseminating information

## **Regional Programming and Publications**

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) team provides numerous resources to the region. These include:

- Regional trainings for county Extension agents.
- Regional publications on watershed protection and drinking water.
- An award-winning series of satellite broadcasts on Watershed Group Management.
- Regional themed conferences on topics such as Total Maximum Daily Loads, Groundwater under the PNW, and Water Policy. The 2011 conference will focus on the Columbia River Basin.

The PNW team publishes monthly regional bulletins and distributes them to the region's state and national legislators, university administrators and faculty, and the county Extension offices in the region. The monthly bulletins are categorized into the following topics such as:

- Drinking Water
- Environmental Restoration
- Nutrient/Pesticide Management
- Water Policy, Economics, Surveys
- Watershed Management
- Urban Issues



A complete library of these publications and activities are located on the regional website ([www.pnwwaterweb.com](http://www.pnwwaterweb.com)) under PNW Water Updates. From this website you may also access materials on Wells and Septics.

### Regional Water and Climate Change Website

The Pacific Northwest Water and Climate website (<https://sites.google.com/a/alaska.edu/pnwwater-and-climate-change/>) is a portal to water and climate change related information that is relevant to the Pacific Northwest region. There are vast amounts of information available on the Internet regarding climate change, and the goal of this website is to make the information easily accessible from one Web portal.

Developed with a variety of uses in mind, the Pacific Northwest Water and Climate Change website can be used as a:

- Portal to the best climate change information on the Web.
- Flexible presentation device that can be reviewed later by people attending a presentation.
- Tool to explore climate impacts in the three ecoregions in the four states.
- Means to disseminate information on water and climate change to the PNW-WATER partners.
- Place for the PNWWATER partners to engage the public on the topic of climate change.

The Web portal also includes state-specific information for the four-state region. The state Web pages include:

- Announcements.
- A map of the state showing a climate scenario from a variety of sources.
- General information about climate and impacts on water in the state.
- Links to state specific climate resources and reports.

### Expanding the Water and Climate Portal

As the project evolves it is becoming apparent that an issue-based design may also be an effective way of conveying informa-

tion. People may go looking for information on flooding, forest fires or erosion in addition to climate change. A web page on one of those topics could then make the connection between the impact and climate change. It could also be used as a social marketing tool to bring about behavior change guiding visitors to resources that would help them answer the question, "What can I do?" Adding that functionality would give an individual the tools to make personal decisions leading to a more climate-resilient region. This would empower the individual to make changes in their lives that would better prepare them for climate impacts. It would start with the individual and work out in a circle from the person to their home, yard, neighborhood, town/city, county, and ecoregion. It would break down the behavior changes into manageable actions, and would make the task of preparing for climate change less overwhelming.

### Summary

Coordination and collaboration at the multi-state level in Water Quality and Climate Change programming has allowed the four PNW states to utilize resources that each state, especially the smaller states of Alaska and Idaho, cannot provide on their own. Since the start of this collaboration in 1995 the relationship built between the team members has increased the flow of communication and therefore the productivity of the four programs. In addition to the initial four state universities two others have become part of the group, Northwest Indian College and recently Heritage College, both in the state of Washington. With the reorganization of CSREES into the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) continued funding for the regional coordination grants may change. Planning has already started to find alternative funding in order to continue this very successful multi-state collaboration.

### References

Mahler, et al. 2010. Information sources, learning opportunities, and priority water issues in the PNW. *Journal of Extension*, 48(2): Article number 2RIB2.

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